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SUBJECT: GAZA HUMANITARIAN UPDATE, JANUARY 13, 1700 HRS

REF: TEL AVIV 100

¶1. (SBU) Kerem Shalom was the only crossing open between Gaza and Israel on January 14, except for limited humanitarian evacuations through Erez. Kerem Shalom transferred 102 truckloads of humanitarian supplies, including three tankers of diesel destined for Gaza hospital generators. The GOI's Joint Coordination Room (JCR) expects Kerem Shalom to handle roughly the same number of trucks on January 15. In addition, the Karni grain conveyor belt is expected to be open; Karni was closed for security reasons all day January ¶14. The JCR is working with UNWRA to move 25 truckloads of cargo through the Erez crossing on January 15. Previous efforts at using Erez for cargo shipments had to be called off because the IDF had not given UNWRA enough lead time to organize convoys to pick up the goods on the Gaza side. Tomorrow will be a test case to see whether this problem has been resolved. The Nahal Oz fuel crossing remained closed today, but there is still fuel to be picked up on the Gaza side. JCR does not expect Nahal Oz to be open tomorrow. (Comment: Despite the JCR's efforts to improve coordination and increase crossing throughput, best estimates are that no more than 180 truckloads of supplies per day will enter Gaza for the foreseeable future; the minimum requirement to meet basic needs is around 200 truckloads per day. End Comment.)

¶12. (SBU) Coordination difficulties that had stymied ICRC and GOI efforts to ensure repair of the Beit Lahiya sewage lagoon appeared to have been resolved as of January 14, though we will not know whether all the repairs have been completed until late evening. As of 1700 hours local, the tanker and tractor needed to take fuel to the sewage pumps had not yet arrived. JCR chief Baruch Spiegel told EconCouns he believes these repairs are a top priority, and if they cannot be done by the Gazan operator, will have to be done by IDF engineers.

¶13. (SBU) As of 1700 hours local, 12 rockets had been fired from Gaza into southern Israel, including a couple of Grads that hit Be'ersheva and Ashdod; 17 rockets were fired yesterday. No casualties were reported from these attacks. The trend in rocket attacks is sharply downward as IDF forces continue to take out launch sites and destroy rocket stockpiles. IDF spokesman's office announced late afternoon that nine launch sites, including some underground sites, and a stockpile of 20 rockets in a private residence in Gaza City had been destroyed on January 14.

¶14. (SBU) Embassy is encouraging COGAT to consider using Kerem Shalom for evacuation of foreign nationals from southern Gaza, in order to provide a full range of options for the U.S., Egypt and Israel in arranging evacuation. Initial response has been encouraging and we are working the issue up the COGAT chain of command. DCM will raise with JCR chief Spiegel at a meeting afternoon of January 15.

¶15. (SBU) COGAT confirmed to Emboff on January 14 that it had approved transfer of NIS 20 million and USD 16 million in

cash through Erez to cover UNWRA salaries and cash support programs. COGAT is working with UNWRA on delivery logistics; the transfer could take place as early as January 16. A larger amount, to cover World Bank program needs, is still under consideration, as is the Palestinian Monetary Authority's request for NIS 243 million to cover PA salaries and arrears in Gaza.

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